

I. Executive Summary

a. Project Title: Watershed Restoration Strategy for the Yolo Bypass
Applicant: Yolo Basin Foundation, Inc.

b. Project Description and Primary Biological/Ecological Objectives

The Yolo Basin Foundation (the Foundation), an established organization of local stakeholders with strong ties to and interest in the Bypass, proposes along with other stakeholder partners to develop a local implementation strategy (Strategy) for CALFED's Ecosystem Restoration Program (ERPP). The Strategy will portray how local stakeholders propose to implement a broad landscape level of restoration and rehabilitation for the Yolo Bypass within the framework of CALFED's Strategic Plan. Our experience in facilitation and unique knowledge of the biological and human resources in the Bypass will be used to develop a process for implementing ecosystem restoration and rehabilitation while applying the techniques of adaptive management. The Foundation would enlist the support of other "local" Bypass stakeholders in forming a Yolo Bypass Working Group and perform the role of a "watershed conservancy" to develop a strategy for environmental restoration and rehabilitation in the Bypass.

c. Approach/Tasks/Schedule

The proposed project consists of the following major phases and tasks:

Phase 1 - Prepare Draft Watershed Restoration Implementation Strategy: identify, contact, and facilitate interaction among stakeholders; develop an atlas of existing resource conditions in the Bypass; develop a preliminary GIS database of Bypass resources; hold meetings with various interest groups and agencies; conduct workshops and field trips; prepare a preliminary strategy document that outlines how restoration activities will be accomplished in the Bypass; collect and compile baseline information on Bypass resources, ecological processes, and functions; present information in a newsletter and web page; identify pilot projects; and compile a final report on Phase 1.

Phase 2 - Prepare Final Watershed Restoration Implementation Strategy : conduct baseline surveys for resources for which there is a shortage or limitation of information available; conduct pilot projects; prepare final strategy; refine GIS database; prepare environmental documentation; obtain permits for projects; conduct other projects identified for immediate implementation.

Phase 3 - Implement projects.

Phase 1 is envisioned as a one-year effort. Phase 2 will likely require a two-year effort. Phase 3 would be a multi-year effort. This proposal requests funding for Phase 1.

d. Justification for Project and Funding by CALFED

To date there has been no organized planning or stakeholder driven effort to conduct a comprehensive watershed management or restoration plan for the entire Yolo Bypass. The Foundation has been the only organized stakeholder group in the area and is thus uniquely qualified to organize such an effort by building upon its earlier success in developing the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. The Bypass is especially important element of CALFED's ERPP given the Bypass's large area of important habitats and presence of many special status species.

e. Budget Costs

This proposal requests a grant of \$292,013 to implement Phase I.

f. Third Party Impacts

No third-party impacts are anticipated.

g. Applicant Qualifications

The Foundation is a community (and watershed) based organization created to assist in the establishment of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. It is a non-profit public benefit corporation dedicated to educating and inspiring people about wetlands and wildlife of the Central Valley. The 15 member board of directors represents a diverse group of interests, from agriculture and waterfowl conservation to local government and the business community. It is universally credited with being the driving force behind the successful Yolo Basin partnership that created the 3700-acre Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area recently dedicated by President Clinton. It continues as the communication link among the many people and organizations involved in creating and managing the Wildlife Area as well as other habitat projects throughout the Yolo Basin (the area defined by CALFED as the Yolo Basin and North Delta Ecological Units). Yolo Basin Foundation staff have the skills, contacts, on-the-ground knowledge and community trust to build the larger, Yolo Bypass-wide stakeholder organization needed to successfully develop a watershed-based ecosystem restoration strategy.

h. Monitoring and Data Evaluation

The Strategy will identify monitoring and data requirements. Information and monitoring plans will be coordinated with existing and planned studies, including the monitoring program of the Interagency Ecological Program (IEP). During Phase 1 we will develop a GIS database of the Bypass.

i. Local Support/Coordination with other programs/Compatibility with CALFED objectives

The Foundation is an established organization with a proven record of success in developing and implementing strategies for restoring habitat in the Yolo Basin. The Board of Directors represents a cross section of the many stakeholders with interests in the Bypass and that have worked together in the past to promote and accomplish habitat restoration. We know and have the trust of many of the local landowners. The regional community supports the Foundation's efforts as evidenced by our long list of members and supporters. The Foundation will ensure coordination with other programs for which it has established affiliations: the Yolo Bypass State Wildlife Area; City of Davis Wetlands, private restoration activities under the aegis of the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture; Conaway Ranch and numerous duck clubs; the proposed North Delta National Wildlife Refuge encompassing Liberty Island, Prospect Island and Little Holland Tract. These and other efforts of the Foundation are consistent with CALFED's objectives to restore the ecosystem health while maintaining water quality, water supply, and the integrity of the area's flood control system.